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Ancient Maya

The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization

In this new archaeological study, Arthur Demarest brings the lost pre-Columbian civilization of Maya to life. In applying a holistic perspective to the most recent evidence from archaeology, paleoecology, and epigraphy, this theoretical interpretation emphasizes both the brilliant rainforest adaptations of the ancient Maya and the Native American spirituality that permeated all aspects of their daily life. Demarest draws on his own discoveries and the findings of colleagues to reconstruct the complex lifeways and volatile political history of the Classic Maya states of the first to eighth centuries. He provides a new explanation of the long-standing mystery of the ninth-century abandonment of most of the great rainforest cities. Finally, he draws lessons from the history of the Classic Maya cities for contemporary society and for the ongoing struggles and resurgence of the modern Maya peoples, who are now re-emerging from six centuries of oppression.

ARTHUR DEMAREST is the Ingram Professor of Anthropology at Vanderbilt University, Tennessee. For more than twenty-five years he has directed archaeological field excavations at ancient sites in the highlands, coasts, and rainforests of Central America and is considered a leading authority on the Olmec, Aztec, Inca, and, particularly, the ancient Maya civilizations.

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Frontmatter
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0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

Contents

List of figures *page* viii
Acknowledgments xv

1 The mystery and the challenge of the ancient Maya 1
Images and realities of the ancient Maya 1
True mysteries and central themes in Maya archaeology 6

2 Background: geography, chronology, and theoretical perspective 8
Geographic setting 8
Chronological frameworks: an overview of Mesoamerican culture history 12
The nested civilizations of Mesoamerica: interpretive frameworks 17
Theoretical perspectives 20
The search for regularities and theories of cultural evolution 21

3 The exploration and archaeology of the Maya: a brief history 31
The Spanish and Colonial historians and explorers 31
The nineteenth-century explorers and archivists 34
The genesis of early scientific archaeology: 1880 to 1920 37
Modern multidisciplinary archaeology begins 41
Traditional views of ancient Maya civilization 43
Revisions and breakthroughs: 1955 to 1990 45

4 Obscure beginnings and the Preclassic florescence 53
New World antecedents: before 12,000 to 3000 BC 53
The beginning of village life, ceramics, and complex societies: 3000 to 1300 BC 56
The "Olmec civilization" and the "Olmec problem" 62
The southern "corridor" of interaction 67
The Late Preclassic highland Maya centers 72
The beginnings of lowland Maya village life 79
Suddenly civilization 83
The coalescence of the Maya state in the lowlands: theories and the new evidence 86

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

5 The splendor of the Classic Maya florescence in the lowlands 89
The elusive essence of Classic Maya civilization 89
The Classic Maya centers 92
The search for patterns in Classic Maya settlement and society 99
The broad sweep of Classic Maya culture history 100

6 Settlement and subsistence: the rain forest adaptation 113
The Maya household group 113
Urban landscape and settlement patterns 117
Population sizes and distribution 118
The rain forest adaptations: the true secret of Maya civilization 120
Ancient Maya agricultural systems 130
Minor and major hydraulic systems and the Maya state 139
Arboriculture and timber exploitation 144
Animal husbandry, hunting, and fishing 145
Subsistence and the Classic Maya state 146

7 Classic Maya economics 148
Local products and raw materials 149
Local and regional markets and exchange systems 150
Commodities trade: salt, chocolate, textiles, and hard stone 152
Long-distance trade in high-status goods 160
Routes of trade and exchange 162
Craft production and specialization 163
Warfare and tribute 172
Maya economics and the state 172

8 Religion and ideology: beliefs and rituals of the theater-states 175
Ancestor worship 176
Gods and the cosmos 177
Shamanism 183
Royal bloodletting 184
Sacrifice 188
Divination 191
Astronomy and astrology 192
The 365-day "*Haab*" and 260-day ritual cycle 193
The Calendar Round 194
The great cycles of time 196
Other sacred cycles and astronomical knowledge 198
Architecture, astronomy, and sacred geography 201
Ceremonial centers as sacred stages 205
Ideology and the Maya theater-states 206

9 Classic Maya politics and history: the dynamics of the theater-states 208
Maya history and the forms of the Classic Maya state 208
The dynamics of the Classic Maya galactic polities 215

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

Regional histories of the Maya states 217
Overview 238

10 The end of Classic Maya civilization: collapse, transition, and transformation 240
Concepts of causality in the decline of civilizations 240
Structural problems of the Classic Maya political order 243
Infrastructural stress and counterproductive responses 245
The nature of the "Classic Maya collapse" 246
The beginning of the end: political devolution and warfare in the Petexbatun collapse 249
Causality in the Petexbatun collapse: alternative hypotheses 255
Collapse in the western Petén 257
Migration and enclave formation in the Pasión Valley and other regions 260
Decline of the Classic tradition in the central Petén 262
Decline, transition, or transformation in the eastern Petén 265
Florescence, conflict, and decline in the northern lowlands 268
Rethinking the "collapse" of ancient Maya civilization 274

11 The legacy of the Classic Maya civilization: Postclassic, Colonial, and Modern traditions 277
The Postclassic: what ended, what continued, and what changed 277
The lowland Postclassic 279
Postclassic Conquest states of the southern highlands 284
The Spanish Conquest of the highland and lowland Maya kingdoms 286
The continuing tradition and the impact of Conquest: the Colonial and modern Maya 289
The enduring and resurgent Maya 291

12 The lessons of Classic Maya history and prehistory 294

Bibliographical essay 298
References 303
Index 364

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

List of figures

1.1	Fallen monuments at the Petén site of El Peru	*page* 2
1.2	Map of eastern Mesoamerica	3
1.3	Catherwood drawing of the ruins at Palenque, Chiapas	4
2.1	Mesoamerica, showing major geographical features	9
2.2	Map of Mesoamerica showing cultural macro-regions	10
2.3	Chronological periods for eastern Mesoamerica	13
2.4	Schematic interregional chronology using the "horizons" concept	19
2.5	Schematic chronology based on assumption of continuous interregional interaction	20
3.1	Catherwood drawing of the site of Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico	32
3.2	Castañeda's drawing of the palace and tower at Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico	34
3.3	James Churchward map showing the lost continents of Atlantis and Mu	35
3.4	Page of the Dresden Codex	36
3.5	Maudslay in tower in Palenque palace	38
3.6	Edward Thompson and divers at the sacred cenote of Chichen Itza (courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University)	39
3.7	Profile of a temple at Holmul showing cache placement and construction levels	40
3.8	Landa's recording of a "Mayan alphabet" (actually a syllabary)	46
3.9	Glyphs phonetically readable in ancient Maya using CV-CV or CV-C(V) syllabic combinations	48
3.10	Map of settlement in greater Tikal (courtesy University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #61-5-5])	50

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

4.1 Clovis and Folsom style spearheads 54
4.2 Map of Mesoamerica showing some zones of Archaic and early village finds 55
4.3 Some Locona and Ocos phase ceramics 59
4.4 Map of Mesoamerica showing Early Formative sites 61
4.5 Colossal head from Olmec site of San Lorenzo, Veracruz, Mexico 63
4.6 Reconstruction of a portion of La Venta, Tabasco, Mexico ceremonial center 63
4.7 Olmec jade celt (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33969]) 64
4.8 Sherd from El Mesak, Guatemala, with "Olmec" were-jaguar figure 65
4.9 Map of eastern Mesoamerica with some Preclassic sites 68
4.10 Stela 5, "Maya style" monument at Abaj Takalik, Guatemala 69
4.11 Stela 25 from the site of Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico (courtesy of the New World Archaeological Foundation) 70
4.12 "Potbellied" style monument from Santa Leticia, El Salvador (courtesy of Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University) 71
4.13 Reconstruction drawing of a portion of the site of Kaminaljuyu 73
4.14 Irrigated gardens at Preclassic Kaminaljuyu 76
4.15 Monument 65, Seated Preclassic rulers at Kaminaljuyu 77
4.16 Reconstruction drawing of terrace and artificial monuments at Santa Leticia, El Salvador (courtesy of Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University) 78
4.17 Cross-section of the North Acropolis of Tikal (courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #67-5-113]) 80
4.18 Mamom style ceramic vessel 81
4.19 Monumental stucco mask at Nakbe (courtesy of Richard Hansen) 84
4.20 Tripartite style Preclassic temple from El Mirador, El Tigre Group (Frontispiece, courtesy of Richard Hansen) 85
5.1 Stela and altar at Tikal 91

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

5.2 Tikal epicenter in jungle 92
5.3 Range structure at Uxmal 93
5.4 Reconstruction drawing by Tatiana Proskouriakoff of the Late Classic epicenter of Copan (courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University) 94
5.5 Cross-section of corbelled vault construction 95
5.6 Excavation of a royal tomb at Dos Pilas, Petén, Guatemala (© Enrico Ferorreli) 97
5.7 Hieroglyphic text, Copan, Honduras (courtesy of Matt O'Mansky) 98
5.8 Early Classic (Tzakol style) vessel 101
5.9 Late Classic polychrome (Tepeu style) vase (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 102
5.10 Pyramid of the Sun, Teotihuacan, Mexico 106
5.11 Map of grid system of Classic Mexican city of Teotihuacan 107
5.12 Drawing of Teotihuacan diagnostics: (a) talud-tablero architectural façade; (b) slab-tripod vessels; (c) ruler with Teotihuacan style "Tlaloc" eye treatment and Mexican headdress (Stela 32, Tikal) (courtesy University of Pennsylvania Museum [lower right field of Tikal neg. #69-5-22]) 108
6.1 Maya thatched-roofed residence (photo courtesy of Matt O'Mansky) 114
6.2 Typical Maya household courtyard group 115
6.3 Modern Maya hamlet (photo courtesy of Matt O'Mansky) 115
6.4 Residences, box terraces, dam, and reservoir at the Late Classic site of Tamarindito, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 118
6.5 Maya lowlands, showing principal environmental features (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 122
6.6 Schematic view of the layers of subtropical forest canopy (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 123
6.7 Petén rain forest vegetation (courtesy of Andrew Demarest) 124
6.8 Howler monkey (courtesy of Andrew Demarest) 125
6.9 Clearing and burning of forest *milpa* 131
6.10 Cross-section of simple terrace forms 134
6.11 Possible agricultural terraces near the site of Caracol, Belize (courtesy of A. Chase and D. Chase, University of Central Florida Caracol Archaeological Project) 135

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

6.12 Cross-section of raised field agricultural systems 136
6.13 Stone box gardens at the site of Punta de Chimino, Petexbatun, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 139
6.14 Fragments of typical Late Classic striated water jars (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 141
6.15 Water control systems at the site of Edzna, Campeche, Mexico (courtesy of the New World Archaeological Foundation) 142
6.16 Canal systems around the site of Calakmul, Campeche, Mexico 143
7.1 Modern highland Maya market at Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala 151
7.2 Maya use of a spindle whirl to prepare thread 155
7.3 Grinding chili with a stone *metate* and *mano* 156
7.4 Obsidian and chert eccentrics from Dos Pilas (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 157
7.5 Some major trade routes of the Petén 159
7.6 Point-plotting of craft production evidence at the site of Aguateca, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 168
7.7 Scene from Late Classic polychrome vase showing elites with serving vessels (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 170
8.1 "Plaza Plan 2" residential group from Punta de Chimino with east side household shrine 177
8.2 Burial with modest grave goods, from Cancuen (courtesy of Andrew Demarest) 178
8.3 Schematic representation of one Classic Maya conception of the cosmos, showing world tree (*axis mundi*) 180
8.4 Some glyphs for Maya deities and sacralized units of time:
a) K'inich Ajaw, "sun-faced lord"
b) Night Jaguar, sun of the night
c) a Pawahtun
d) a Chaak
e) Bak'tun
f) K'atun 181
8.5 Cosmogram of Preclassic temple at Cerros, Belize (© David Schele) 182
8.6 Drawing of Lintel from Temple 1, Tikal, Guatemala (courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Museum [neg. #69-3-96]) 185

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

8.7 Ruler making a blood offering (Lintel 2 from La Pasadita) (© David Schele) 186
8.8 Maya queen experiencing a vision (Lintel 25 from Yaxchilan, Chiapas, Mexico) (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33711]) 187
8.9 Ruler Wataklajuun Ub'aah K'awiil (sometimes referred to as "18 Rabbit") after a blood autosacrifice (Stela H from Copan) 189
8.10 Maya queen making an autosacrificial blood offering (Lintel 24 from Yaxchilan) (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum [MMO33783]) 190
8.11 Schematic of the meshed "Calendar Round" cycles of the 260-day ritual almanac, or *Tzolkin*, and the 365-day "vague solar year" or *Haab* 195
8.12 Long Count date from Quirigua, Stela F 197
8.13 Circular Caracol temple/observatory at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of Mark Ochsner) 202
8.14 Drawing of "E-group temple" showing solar alignments at solstices and equinoxes 203
8.15 Cosmogram at Dos Pilas, showing central position of the Murcielagos royal palace 204
9.1 Emblem glyphs of some Classic Maya centers 210
9.2 Some glyphs for political titles of lords, vassals, and overlords 211
9.3 Glyphs for major events in rulers' life histories 212
9.4 Royal court scene on Late Classic Maya vase (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 212
9.5 Some major Classic Maya centers 219
9.6 Stela 1, Tres Islas, Guatemala 221
9.7 Caana temple at Caracol (courtesy of A. Chase and D. Chase, University of Central Florida Caracol Archaeological Project) 224
9.8 Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 4, discovered in 1990 225
9.9 Dos Pilas Panel 19 (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 226
9.10 Late Classic subregions and sites of the Maya lowlands (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 227
9.11 Western entrance to the sprawling royal palace of Cancuen, Petén, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 230

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

9.12 Battle scene from the Bonampak murals (© Bonampak Documentation Project) 231
9.13 Part of the Late Classic epicenter of Palenque, Chiapas, Mexico 232
9.14 The Copan epicenter (with ballcourt and hieroglyphic stairway) 233
9.15 Stela E from Quirigua, Guatemala 234
9.16 Puuc style arch at Labna, Mexico (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning) 237
9.17 Puuc stone mosaic decoration on the façade of the House of the Governor at Uxmal, Yucatan (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning) 237
10.1 Levels of causality in the decline of civilization 241
10.2 Some salient characteristics of most Classic Maya states 243
10.3 Some structural problems of Classic Maya states (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 247
10.4 Petexbatun region and some major sites (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 250
10.5 Dos Pilas Western Group (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 251
10.6 Eighth-century defensive systems around the El Duende complex, Dos Pilas, Guatemala (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 252
10.7 Portion of the fortification system at Aguateca (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 253
10.8 Fortified hilltop village in the Petexbatun (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 254
10.9 Late Classic site of Punta de Chimino with defensive moats and protected intensive garden zones (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 254
10.10 Schematic interpretation of causality in the collapse of the Late Classic Petexbatun kingdom (courtesy of Vanderbilt University Press) 258
10.11 Monument 3 of Seibal showing unusual Terminal Classic iconography and garb (courtesy of John A. Graham 1973) 262
10.12 Tikal in ruins in the (Eznab) Terminal Classic period 264
10.13 The Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal (courtesy of Nicholas P. Dunning) 270

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

10.14 Map of defensive walls around Cuca, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of David Webster) 272
10.15 Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico (courtesy of Mark Ochsner) 273
11.1 Map of the Postclassic capital of Mayapan (courtesy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington) 281
11.2 Ruins of Postclassic temple complex at Tulum 282
11.3 Map of the Postclassic highland Kaqchikel capital at Iximche' 285
11.4 Colonial map of the center of Iximche' 288
11.5 A modern Q'eqchi' Maya Wa'atesink ritual (courtesy of Christopher Talbott) 291
11.6 Archaeologists participating in a Q'eqchi' Maya Hac ritual at the archaelogical site of Cancuen (courtesy of Andrew Demarest) 292

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Cambridge University Press
0521533902 - Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rainforest Civilization
Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

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I hope that any future references will cite the full title of this book, *Ancient Maya: The Rise and Fall of a Rain Forest Civilization*, so as not to confuse this extended, interpretive essay with *The Ancient Maya* by Robert Sharer (with previous editions by Sharer, Morley, and Brainerd;

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Arthur Demarest
Frontmatter
More information

Morley and Brainerd; and Morley), which is a much longer and more comprehensive (almost encyclopedic) text. That work has been for many decades, and continues to be, an essential reference work for our sub-field.

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